

UNCLASSIFIED

RELEASED IN FULL

M31

MEMORANDUM TO THE SECRETARY

FROM: Timothy E. Wirth

SUBJECT: Rwanda and Burundi

I have just returned from a week in these small, poor and desperately over-populated countries -- a fitting climax to a month that began with the United Nations Population Conference in Cairo.

1. Rwanda - Impressions: From the air, the rich volcanic hills of Rwanda could well be China, as they are terraced right to the peak of the mountains. The mountain gorillas, like China's panda bears, are a remaining symbol of a broadly devastated environment. And wherever you find adults you find more children.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

- 2 -

In Kigali, a stalwart U.S. mission lives with remarkable good cheer: the USIA library is a bunk room; the residence is unlivable, and the Ambassador stays in the DCM's house, where nearly every window is broken, the jagged broken glass is still in the window frames, and pieces of shrapnel are lodged in the porch furniture. But the hot water works; across the street, UNAMIR soldiers are bathing in a pan of cold water (the power is on occasionally) and most have been on hard rations for three months (mobile refrigeration units that would allow a varying of the menu have been sitting in Antwerp for weeks awaiting UN approval to be flown South). On the streets every fourth house appears to be destroyed, a pattern repeated in village after village. Burned out cars, now stripped of everything, litter nearly every street; in the country, the roads are completely empty except for the occasional long UN convoy.

From the air, the eye quickly picks out the bright blue sheets of plastic, distributed by UNHCR and the sign of another sprawling refugee camp. In these, the ever-present Toyota Land Cruisers carry the competent and dedicated government and non-government officials in their tasks of trying to create a little order or hope for the hundreds of thousands. All watch

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

- 3 -

the clock carefully, and get out of the camps or off the roads before dark, when danger and violence replace the apparent order of the day. And again, there are children everywhere -- and all expect that if the camps are still open, an explosion of the camp populations will begin in seven months (nine months after the camps were established). AIDS is reportedly devastating the camps, with so many unaccompanied women and mothers victims of the violence of the night.

Two hours drive from the capital, we visited two rural Catholic churches. In one, the front door was broken in, hundreds of people had been slaughtered, the ceiling was pock-marked with grenade fragments, and large pools of dried blood caked the pews. In the other, the bodies had not yet been cleaned up, and corpses, many completely decapitated, were strewn around the church amid clothing, shoes and bibles. The stench of rotting bodies, and the pile of corpses next to the altar, on which lay a broken crucifix, reminded of the horrors of the April massacres.

Vast sections of this intensely cultivated country, with huts every few yards, are eerily empty, because so many people have left. Crops sit in so many fields, and the rainy season is underway. Planting should soon be starting, and one can't

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

- 4 -

help but think that the huge relief operations will have to be around next year as well, attempting to avert starvation in the camps or among those who have returned home to uncultivated fields. (Before the war, Rwanda was largely food self-sufficient).

Will the empty countryside fill up? Probably, but exactly how is perhaps the most problematic issue in this turbulent land. The government Army (RPA) is led by Tutsi officers who have been in exile in Uganda, and who came South when their guerilla campaign began in the early 1990's. Now they are being joined by others, returning to their homeland from Tanzania, Burundi, and Zaire as well as Uganda. Whose houses are they living in and whose fields are they tilling? If the majority Hutu population returns, will they find their houses occupied and land taken -- the country has no extra land anywhere. Long term, when the population doubles in the next twenty years, where will all these people go? Can the poverty get even worse, as more people share the limited economic pie?

2. What are we doing in Rwanda? How do we explain to the American taxpayer that to date we have spent nearly \$500 million in refugee assistance, in a country of unexplained and

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

- 5 -

inexplicable violence, where we have no apparent strategic or economic interests, and where the prospects for the short term and the long term are dim at best? How long can the enormous political, financial and organizational effort be maintained? And won't this little country on the other side of the globe get crowded out of the public attention span, despite the horrors of its genocide?

These cold questions have to be addressed, even if answers aren't obvious or even possible. We have to have some definition of our mission, of the possible endgames, and of the costs. Undoubtedly there will be other Rwandas in our future, and while we struggle to make sense of our current operations in Rwanda, we must also work to learn from our experience so we can better understand and predict future challenges.

Next Steps

The Rwandan conflict is not over. Two million refugees remain outside the country, elements of the ex-FAR are threatening to renew fighting, the ex-interim government leadership and much of the refugee population consider the new government unacceptable, and an overall political settlement and national reconciliation are distant goals.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

- 6 -

Under these circumstances, our first priority must be to ensure that fighting and widescale violence do not resume and that conditions are created, inside and outside Rwanda, that will lead to a lessening of tensions and a move to an overall settlement.

In line with this goal, we should focus our efforts on the following key near term goals designed to improve security in the subregion and create conditions inside Rwanda that will encourage refugee return:

- o Improving Security/Confidence Inside Rwanda
 - Accelerated, full deployment of UNAMIR in all sectors
 - Accelerated deployment of human rights monitors
 - Expansion of NGO activities in the south and east
- o Deterring a Resumption of Hostilities
 - Active pursuit of plans to move the FAR away from the refugees
 - Deployment of a UN force in Zaire refugee camps
 - Security assistance to Tanzanians
 - UN monitoring of borders against incursion

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

- 7 -

- o Removing the Bad Actors from the Scene
 - Expedited War Crimes tribunal/trials

- o Improving Conditions Inside Rwanda
 - Assistance to get the Government functioning, restart judicial processes, and restore basic services
 - Pay off-World Bank arrears to free up funds for GOR
 - Increase direct bilateral assistance
 - Assistance on resolving property disputes
 - Pressure on the GOR to keep its commitment to follow the Arusha accord, with the possibility at some future point of renewed Arusha talks with "innocent" elements of the Hutu diaspora

3. Burundi - an apparent contrast. The country next door seems peaceful by comparison. Markets are open, the airport operates, cars are on the streets, and a government of reconciliation will under present plans, come together within the next week. The President, a French-educated philosopher, speaks eloquently of the need to protect women, promote family planning, and maintain a vigorous dialogue with the West. The military leadership speak proudly of their recent human rights training in Geneva, and ask if they can have help from the U.S. in promoting broader understanding of human rights and

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

- 8 -

relationships between military and civilian authorities. Can this be the same country where 100,000 people were slaughtered in a coup attempt last October, and where the tribal ratios are the same as in their deeply troubled neighbor? It was hard to remember that our security warned us away from the markets where two grenades had been exploded the previous week.

As one moves from Rwanda to Burundi, it becomes increasingly clear that the problems are regional (Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire, Uganda, Tanzania) and common (refugees, military-civilian relations, human rights, economics, population and AIDS). Key areas to pursue for Burundi are:

- o A regional refugee conference
- o Improved civil-military relations
 - Human rights training for the military
 - Future regional conferences on civil-military relations
- o Economic/financial support and reform, through support to the World Bank/IMF Friends of Burundi donor group process
- o Action to counter hate radio broadcasts
- o Further family planning assistance

UNCLASSIFIED